

## **WHAT IS IT?**

There are many evidence-based social skills curricula designed specifically to support the development of students' social skills (e.g., taking others' perspective, sharing materials or solving social problems). Social Skills Curricula include things such as, modeling social skills with students, explicit teaching of social skills, and providing repeated opportunities for students to practice these skills (e.g. through routines and games, prepared role-play and real world experience as they arise).



### **EXAMPLE**

Mr. Clark has become increasingly frustrated during small group work. He carefully chooses activities that require and foster small group work, however he is not able to manage these activities effectively. He has observed that his students have trouble taking turns with the materials, waiting briefly to get his attention or listening to each other. Mr. Clark decided to implement a social skills curriculum to explicitly teach these skills to his students. After systematically using a social skills curriculum in his classroom for several months, he has observed that his students have gradually developed skills to work cooperatively with others. Mr. Clark is now able to set up and manage small group work. He also uses group tasks from the curriculum as repeated opportunities for his students to remember and practice the skills they learned!

## **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?**

For many students, kindergarten is the first formal setting where they have an opportunity to interact with peers and adults, outside of their family. When young students have not developed the social skills needed to appropriately interact with others, it is difficult for them to share and cooperate with their peers (e.g. being bossy or rude), which may lead to some aggressive behaviors (e.g. yelling or hitting). Teachers can implement a social skills curriculum to purposefully help students to develop their social skills.

Students with well-developed social skills are better able to:

- ✓ Communicate their feelings and needs in a socially appropriate manner
- ✓ Take a peer's perspective and empathize with their needs
- ✓ Share materials and toys with their peers

# GUIDE TO USING A SOCIAL SKILLS CURRICULUM

## HOW TO USE A SOCIAL SKILLS CURRICULUM

### 1. Choosing a Social Skills Curriculum

The choice to implement a Social Skills Curriculum is best accomplished when several members of the school community are involved (e.g. administrators, teachers, specialists and families). When all the interested parties are involved in the decision of adopting a Social Skills Curriculum, it is more likely that they all work together and support students' development of social skills!

- ✓ Meet with your team to discuss your needs for adopting a social skills curriculum:
  - What goal(s) do you hope to achieve through the implementation of a Social Skills Curriculum? For example, develop friendship skills or reduce bullying. These goals will help to guide your choice of curriculum.
  - What are the characteristics of your school and students? Consider the linguistic background of your students, or the culture of your school, for example.
  - What resources do you have available to implement the curriculum as intended? For example, time that you have available to attend trainings or supports in the beginning while you are learning the curriculum.
- ✓ There are many evidence-based programs available on the web. After consultation with your team, we encourage you to search for programs that meet the needs of your students. To help get you started, here are four commonly used evidence-based programs in schools: "Al's Pals: Kids Making Healthy Choices", "The Incredible Years", "PATHS curriculum" or "Second Step" (see "CASEL – 2013 Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs – Preschool and Elementary School Edition" under Additional Resources).
- ✓ Once you have selected a few programs, meet with your team again to select the best intervention to meet the needs of your classroom and students. This is probably the most important step!

### 2. Implementing a social skills curriculum

Social Skills Curriculums are most effective when they are implemented as intended. For this reason, it is essential that you receive comprehensive training on how to implement the curriculum, as well as continuous support and communication to meet your own needs!

Adapted from CSEFEL: How to choose a social-emotional curriculum.  
The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, Vanderbilt University  
[http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/documents/dmg\\_choose\\_se\\_curriculum.pdf](http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/documents/dmg_choose_se_curriculum.pdf)

## RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT USING A SOCIAL SKILLS CURRICULUM

**How to Choose a Social-Emotional Curriculum**

[Available as PDF](#)

CSEFEL©

**Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning**

[Available as PDF](#)

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